

Reasonable Adjustments to Learning, Teaching & Assessment for Disabled Students

1. Introduction

The University values the diversity of its student population and is strongly committed to creating and sustaining a first-rate and positive learning experience for all. The adoption of inclusive teaching, learning and assessment methods does not negate the need for universities to make reasonable adjustments for individual students. The University will consider all requests for reasonable adjustments to arrangements for the learning teaching and assessment of disabled students. Reasonable adjustments are when the University makes an alteration to reduce the effect of an impairment or medical condition that places the person at a substantial disadvantage to other students in relation to:

- a provision, criteria or practice
- physical features
- auxiliary aids

For the purpose of this policy the definition of disability is that which is stated in the Equality Act 2010 namely that 'a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment, and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities'

'That effect must be substantial (more than minor or trivial), adverse, and long term (has lasted or is likely to last for at least a year) This includes conditions which are controlled by medication which might be variable in effect, or which might recur. For example, a student who has cancer, HIV, multiple sclerosis or mental health difficulties, should be treated as disabled under the Act.'

This policy and University practice is compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and is drawn up with reference to the good practice guidance available in the sector, e.g. [Managing reasonable adjustments in higher education](#); Equality Challenge Unit; November 2010.

UWE Academic Regulations confirms UWE's commitment to making Reasonable adjustments.

2. Scope

This document provides both students and staff with information about the University's approach to making Reasonable adjustments to Learning, Teaching and Assessment for disabled students.

3. Statement of Principles

The University applies the following principles in considering Reasonable adjustments:

- (a) Equality and diversity underpins the University's core values. [Single Equality Scheme \(SES\)](#) has been developed to ensure that equality and diversity is embedded in everything we do.
- (b) Students, will not be unreasonably prevented from applying for, registering upon, or successfully completing a programme of study.
- (c) Reasonable adjustments must not undermine confidence in the academic standards of programme or modules as demonstrated in the learning outcomes.
- (d) Determination of what is reasonable may vary between programmes of study as a result of their differing requirements particularly in relation to students on programmes that are regulated by a Professional, Statutory and Regulatory body (PSRB) and lead to a licence to

practice or registration with a professional body. Placement providers may be involved in agreeing reasonable adjustments.

(f) All requests for reasonable adjustments will be processed in line with the [UWE Bristol Terms and Conditions](#) and [UWE Bristol Student Support and Wellbeing data privacy notice](#).

4. Reasonable Adjustments

The duty to make Reasonable adjustments arises where disabled persons are placed at a substantial disadvantage, compared with people who are not disabled, in relation to: A provision, criterion or practice applied by (or on behalf of) the education provider; any physical feature of premises occupied by the education provider. A reasonable adjustment helps to reduce the effect of an impairment or medical condition that places the person at a substantial disadvantage in their learning, teaching or assessment situation.

In relation to assessment there is no duty to make any adjustment to the application of a 'competence standard', but the duty does apply to *the process* by which competence is assessed. Competence standards are defined by section 28S of the DDA Part 4 as 'an academic, medical or other standard applied by or on behalf of a [Higher Education Institution] for the purpose of determining whether or not a person has a particular level of competence or ability.'

Reasonable adjustments must not affect the validity or reliability of assessment outcomes, but may involve, for example; changing usual assessment arrangements; adapting assessment materials; providing assistance during assessment; re-organising the assessment physical environment and using assistive technology.

5. Determining Reasonable Adjustments – legal context

Recent guidance is available from the Equality Challenge Unit on inclusivity and reasonable adjustments.¹ UWE will also consider the facts of each individual case and make individual adjustments if appropriate

There are three main factors to address when considering Reasonable adjustments:

1. Whether the student is disadvantaged by the method of teaching or assessment;
2. Whether the suggested adjustments would help overcome the disadvantage;
3. Whether the adjustments are reasonable both in terms of proportionality and practically/implementable.

5.1. Does a disadvantage exist?

In considering individual cases the University will consider how the student's impairment interacts with the method of teaching or assessment to ensure that the adjustment requested is in fact due to disability-related reasons, and is not just an expression of preference.

5.2. Is the adjustment reasonable?

There is no clear indication in law about exactly what a reasonable adjustment is.

Factors to consider include:

- Effectiveness
- Practicality of the changes
- Health and safety
- Confidentiality
- Potential benefit to other staff, students and visitors

¹ Managing reasonable adjustments in higher education; Equality Challenge Unit; November 2010

<http://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/managing-reasonable-adjustments-in-higher-education>

It is noted that, when considering whether the cost of an adjustment is reasonable, the resources of the university, not the individual faculty or school, are considered. It is not acceptable to consider the student's potential to gain eventual employment when making reasonable adjustments (i.e. to refuse a reasonable adjustment because of customary industry practice) unless these are clearly prescribed competence standards (such as fitness to practice standards). See section 8 in relation to programmes with professional practice e.g. nursing.

5.3. Determining Reasonable adjustments to Teaching, Learning and Assessment at UWE

The University's processes for determining reasonable adjustments and who is responsible for putting those adjustments in place for individual students can be found [here](#). For example adjustments required in class (retrieved via class lists) are the responsibility of teaching staff to implement as agreed. Disability Services should be contacted where there are any concerns in making these adjustments. Reasonable adjustments may vary from relatively standard adjustments, which can be automatically approved, to non-standard adjustments which need consideration in relation to individual programme requirements and/or other local context.

Disability Service will consider eligibility and proportionality of requests. They will automatically arrange standard adjustments where no reference to others are required to make these happen.

For non-standard adjustments, or in absence of an anticipatory adjustment, the Disability Adviser will co-ordinate the request on behalf of the student. They will liaise with the academic school (normally programme or module leader), the student, the Graduate School (in relation to postgraduate research students) and other professional services e.g. timetabling as necessary, taking into account issues of confidentiality, in order to ensure that appropriate reasonable adjustments take account of local context and are made in line with individual programme requirements. The support arrangements will be documented in the student's case file and confirmed to both the student and staff who need to be informed to put arrangements in place.

There is a nominated escalation route within academic schools and professional services who can be brought into the discussion when determining what is reasonable and/or resolving any issues. This will normally Head of Service/Department/School or nominee.

5.4. Teaching Materials in advance

Many students require teaching materials in advance as a reasonable adjustment. University policy requires the early placing of materials on blackboard, as an inclusive practice for all students.

6. Communication about the student's adjustments

Only those staff responsible for arranging the adjustment will be informed. This is normally as follows:

Professional services including Disability Service, Central Examination and Timetabling Services (CETTS) for exam adjustments, the Student Administration team for adjustments to other assessments as well as staff teaching the student. The processes by which these adjustments are communicated can be found

7. Impact Statements

An impact statement is a short paragraph or sentence about a student's impairment and may include the impact on their study and the strategies they have in place. Impact Statements are written in consultation with students and shared with the teaching team to support the student's access to their studies and to promote disability awareness.

8. Review of adjustments

Where concerns arise such as; multiple and ongoing requests, inability to make requested adjustments or student failing to meet their obligations a review meeting can be requested involving student, academic department and/or other professional service colleagues involved in making the adjustments.

9. Placements / Professional practice/ field visits / study abroad

Placements and visits might require different adjustments to those made for academic study. Students should talk to the person arranging the placement about their needs and/or make an appointment to discuss these with a disability adviser via [Info Points](#).

Students on professional programmes

Students on professional programmes have to meet specific requirements related to the need to demonstrate certain knowledge, skills and competencies required by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies that cannot be compromised. In considering Reasonable adjustments, these will be taken into account when agreeing what adjustments are possible. See section 4 for further information on competence standards.

It may be appropriate to convene an 'Access Plan for Placements' meeting for some work based placements. For example in the case of Nursing programmes this could be a meeting between the student, the practice provider and academic department. Students should contact their Programme Leader who will advise on process if they have not been contacted directly already. Reasonable adjustments could be to operational shift pattern for example or to discuss how learning outcomes can be demonstrated with adjustments eg ability to calculate drug dosage. Separate procedures for this exist, available from Disability Service.

10. Disclosure

Applicants and students are strongly encouraged to disclose any disability or support needs they may have at the earliest opportunity to enable the University to work in partnership with them to enable academic success and career goals. If Disability Service are fully aware of a student's needs they will be better equipped to ensure students are supported. Failure to engage in discussions during the admissions stage or late notification might mean that a request cannot be met in full immediately and not able to fully access their studies at the beginning of the academic year. The University invites students to disclose at every opportunity from point of initial enquiry, at application and registration and at regular points through the student journey.

Note that some courses such as Nursing and Teaching leading to a professional registration require disclosure as part of the Occupational Health (OH) clearance. Failure to do so could lead to questions over professional suitability and also concerns to health and wellbeing of

student or patient safety. Details on whether a course requires OH clearance can be found at [UWE courses](#) .

All information provided is confidential and will be processed in line with the UWE Bristol [Terms and Conditions](#) and [UWE Bristol Student Support and Wellbeing data privacy notice](#).

In most circumstances, only members of staff responsible for agreeing or implementing appropriate reasonable adjustments will be informed and this will be only with the student's prior consent. However, where serious and valid concerns for the health and wellbeing of a student arise in consideration of their request for reasonable adjustments then others may be informed.

11. Evidence of Need

Any request for reasonable adjustments should be supported by clear evidence or diagnosis as this is the best way to gain a deeper understanding into the nature and level of your needs. – for example, an educational psychologist's report; study needs assessment or a letter from a GP or psychiatrist.

Students can still contact Disability Service where there is currently no evidence. We know there can be delays to diagnosis and to medical evidence and this should not prohibit supporting students where there is a clear need.

Disability Service is responsible for determining appropriate evidence and proportionality.

12. International students

International students on tier 4 student visas who request adjustments which will affect the length of their study are advised that they *must* seek up-to-date immigration advice promptly.

The maximum period of approved authorised absence is normally 30 days although requests will be considered on an individual basis in line with UK Border Agency regulations. Students seeking an extended period of absence from their studies which would result in them requiring an extension of their visa to complete their studies will have their Tier 4 sponsorship ended by UWE and they will be expected to leave the UK. Once able to return to the UK the student will request that Tier 4 sponsorship is recommenced. Once issued with a new CAS they will apply for a visa to return to the UK for the remainder of their studies

In all cases, the University's legal responsibilities in relation to the sponsorship of international students under the points-based immigration system will take precedence as detailed in the UWE's Tier 4 policy.

13. Student support

There may be implications for a student's financial arrangements depending on adjustments agreed, both in terms of fees payable and student support available. Where this is the case these will be discussed with the student, involving other professional service teams as necessary to enable student to make an informed decision before putting adjustments in place.

14. Personal Circumstances

Sometimes other processes are more appropriate to help a student facing difficult circumstances. Further details on other processes can be found [here](#) .

15. Policy Review

The Head of Disability Service will ensure that this Policy is reviewed after the first year of operation and subsequently every three years or sooner if there are legal or institutional changes which impact upon it.

Policy Review Approved By: Learning, Teaching & Student Experience Committee on 6th February 2019

If you have any queries about this Policy or about Reasonable adjustments, either generally or in relation to an individual case, please contact Disability.Advisers@uwe.ac.uk or via [Info Points](#)